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Changing Lives: Local Dentist Treats Obstructive Sleep Apnea Patients

Centro Dental Mahaai

Curacao, Rob J Hageman, a member of the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine (AADSM), is committed to offering an alternative treatment for people suffering from Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA). OSA affects approximately 18 million Americans, causing them to stop breathing for 10 to 30 seconds, sometimes for one minute or longer, hundreds of times a night.

For several years, Dr. Hageman has practiced dental sleep medicine (DSM), which is the management of sleep-related breathing disorders, such as snoring and OSA, with oral appliance therapy (OAT) and upper airway surgery.

“Scientific studies have shown that approximately 25 percent to 50 percent of patients with OSA are unable to comply with Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP), the standard treatment therapy, or do not tolerate it, leaving a large number of OSA patients that dentists can help with OAT,” Dr. Hageman said.

OAT involves the customized selection, fabrication, fitting, adjustments, and long-term follow-up care of specially designed oral devices, worn during sleep, which reposition the lower jaw and tongue forward to maintain a more open upper airway. Oral appliances (OAs) look similar to mouth guards, but should be selected and fitted by a dentist trained in DSM to maintain unobstructed breathing during sleep.

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine has published practice parameters, stating that oral appliance therapy is indicated for treatment of patients with mild to moderate apnea if they prefer it to CPAP, cannot tolerate CPAP, or are unable to use positional therapy or weight loss to control their apnea. OAs are also recommended for severe patients if they are unable to tolerate CPAP.

Warning signs of OSA include excessive daytime sleepiness, snoring, morning headaches, poor memory and mood changes. If a patient undergoes a polysomnography and is diagnosed with OSA by a sleep physician at an accredited sleep center, he or she may be sent to a dentist for treatment.

“Unfortunately, OSA is a growing problem, with overweight and obese people making up one of the highest risk groups for this disease,” Dr. Hageman said. “But OAT is a safe and effective treatment option that will help decrease the prevalence of untreated OSA and improve patients’ overall health.”

Facts about Obstructive Sleep Apnea:

- OSA can contribute to excessive daytime sleepiness as well as an increased risk for high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, diabetes, obesity and driving accidents.
- Experts estimate that 80 percent to 90 percent of adults with OSA remain undiagnosed and untreated.
- OSA with resulting daytime sleepiness occurs in at least four percent of men and two percent of women.

About The American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine



The American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine (AADSM) is a professional organization of more than 1,900 dentists worldwide. Established in 1991, the AADSM promotes the research and clinical use of oral appliance therapy and upper airway surgery for the treatment of sleep-related breathing disorders, such as Obstructive Sleep Apnea, and provides training and resources for dentists and other professionals who work directly with patients. Dedicated to fostering the study and practice of oral appliance therapy, the AADSM offers educational courses for dental students and practicing dentists, distributes cutting-edge information through peer-reviewed publications, pamphlets and DVDs, and establishes and maintains appropriate treatment protocol. Visit www.aadsm.org or call the national office at (630) 737-9705 for more information.